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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2018

TAGS: KPAL PHUM PREL SP IS

SUBJECT: SPAIN ISSUES COMMUNIQUE CRITICAL OF GAZA LOCKDOWN

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Spanish Director General for the Middle East Alvaro Iranzo called DCM January 21, at the request of FM Moratinos, to provide early warning that Spain would be issuing a communique that would be critical of Israeli military operations in Gaza as well as the border closings. Iranzo, calling from Morocco where Moratinos was attending a meeting of the 5 5 of the EU-Mediterranean Dialogue, said that Spain felt the Israeli response had been disproportionate to the Hamas rocket attacks and that the extreme measure of shutting the border crossings was unduly punishing the civilian population of Gaza. The military operations also undermined the credibility of Abu Mazen and were therefore not in keeping with the spirit of the Annapolis conference.

¶2. (C) The DCM thanked Iranzo for the advance notice and replied that Hamas had fired over 100 rockets into Israel in recent days, and that Israel had the right to defend itself. The DCM noted that if Spain or the U.S. faced the same kind of daily attacks from neighbors our response might also be disproportionate. However, the DCM acknowledged the importance of supporting Abu Mazen and appreciated Spain's strong interest in playing a positive role in the Middle East. The DCM undertook to pass the information to Washington.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Moratinos' special effort to give the Embassy a heads up is something new. The strong tone of the communique may be in part due to the January 22 visit to Madrid of Palestinian FM Salam Fayyad. Fayyad will meet with President Zapatero. END COMMENT.

¶4. (U) Begin text of communique (Embassy informal translation):

The Government of Spain wishes to express its profound concern over the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, calls on Israeli authorities to immediately reestablish normality in the administration of supplies and social services to the population of the Strip, and reiterates that any measure which indiscriminately punishes the civilian population is contrary to international humanitarian law.

The Government of Spain calls on the Palestinian factions in Gaza to immediately cease the launching of rockets, which pose grave danger to the civilian population and do not serve the interests of the Palestinian people, into Israeli territory and also calls for the reinstatement of Palestinian National Authority governance in Gaza.

The Government of Spain reiterates its full support for the peace negotiations recently initiated by the parties and asks that any action which could undermine the mutual confidence

necessary to bring these negotiations to a good conclusion be avoided.

AGUIRRE